



## Understanding the problem of domestic violence in Virginia.

### A Definition:

Virginians Against Domestic Violence uses the following definition of domestic violence:

*Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors used by one individual intended to exert power and control over another individual in the context of an intimate or family relationship.*

▼ **pattern:** Domestic violence involves more than one or even several isolated incidents of violence. It involves an interrelated pattern that includes a wide variety of abusive behaviors and usually increases in frequency and intensity over time.

▼ **abusive behaviors:** Abusive or coercive behaviors may include, but are not limited to, physical assaults, verbal assaults, threats, intimidation, use of weapons, destruction of property, violence toward other significant people or pets, sexual manipulation and control over economic resources.

▼ **intended to exert power and control:** The pattern of behaviors is not a matter of coincidence or the result of a time-limited crisis. Rather, it is an ongoing pattern in the relationship whereby the abuser acts to control the other person.

▼ **intimate or family relationship:** A relationship between two adults intended to provide emotional and physical intimacy.

It is very important to recognize that domestic violence is not always physical. Verbal, emotional, and economic abuse can have long-lasting effects, even if a victim is never physically or sexually assaulted.

### The Facts:

▼ 1 in 4 women and 1 in 13 men has been physically assaulted and/or raped by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, or date. Women sustain injury more frequently in these assaults. (*National Violence Against Women Survey, 1998*)

▼ Every 5 days in 2001, a Virginian was killed by her or his intimate partner. (*Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2003*). Women are at highest risk when they try to leave an abusive relationship.

▼ More than 40,000 domestic and sexual violence victims called hotlines in Virginia in 2002.

Here are some statistics about victims who received services from Domestic Violence Programs in 2002:

▼ 96% of adult victims were women, mostly between the ages of 18 and 44. They came from all economic and racial backgrounds.

▼ **3 out of 4** sought help from family or friends before contacting a domestic violence program. Less than half called the police for help.

▼ More than half of the adults reported that physical resistance to violence was not helpful. Fighting back often increased or prolonged the violence.

▼ 58% of adults who were abused by their partners had been threatened with **homicide or suicide**.

▼ More than a third were threatened with a **firearm** or had one used against them.

▼ The number one concern of adult victims was the impact of violence on their children. Other top concerns included housing, safety, and child custody.

▼ More than half of the children who received services had **witnessed** an act of violence, usually in the home.

▼ More than 1 out of 3 children were **threatened** with physical harm by the perpetrator. 1 out of 4 were physically **injured**.

